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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/01/25
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MONUC](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [FR](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: French FM Kouchner Discusses MONUC, RFI Closure with Kabila

REF: 09 KINSHASA 1102; 09 KINSHASA 980; 09 KINSHASA 723

CLASSIFIED BY: William J. Garvelink, Ambassador, STATE, Embassy
Kinshasa; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) On January 11, we met with Laurence Monmayrant, French Embassy polcouns, and Philippe Guerin, the French Embassy's Goma-based diplomat. Guerin, who was present in the Kabila-Kouchner meeting in Kinshasa on January 8, told us "there was not much substance" to the discussion. Kouchner stressed to Kabila that it would be important for the DRC and international community to give MONUC its full support to carry out its renewed mandate, particularly to ensure adequate civilian protection. Kouchner also raised the continued closure of Radio France International (RFI) in the DRC (reftels), arguing for the need to allow RFI to resume broadcasting. Guerin said that the DRC side suggested a "half-measure," allowing RFI to broadcast to certain regions in the DRC. Guerin said that this was ultimately not a satisfactory response for the GoF. Overall, Guerin noted the visit went well.

¶2. (C) Kouchner, according to Guerin, also briefed Kabila on his Kigali meetings, particularly in light of the arrival of a French Ambassador in Kigali. Kouchner emphasized that France wanted good relations with both the DRC and Rwanda. Kabila, Guerin added, was completely supportive of more normal relations between the GoF and GoR. Separately, during a lunch hosted by the French ambassador for DRC political actors and civil society, Kouchner was surprised by the level of distrust towards Rwanda and unhappiness with the Kinshasa-Kigali rapprochement.

¶3. (C) Comment: We frequently receive similar feedback (surprise at Congolese distrust of Rwanda and a belief that foreigners prefer Rwanda to the DRC) from interlocutors across the spectrum of society. Although an important first step has been taken in bringing the countries closer together, much work still needs to be done to overcome skepticism and distrust among the great majority of Congolese. End comment.
GARVELINK